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PUNCH



OCTOBER
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1947

Vol. CCXIII
No. 5570

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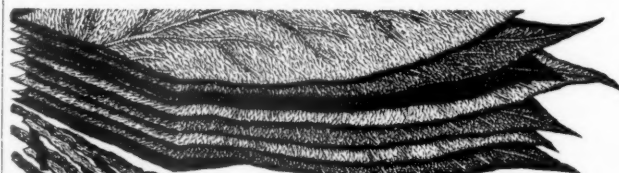


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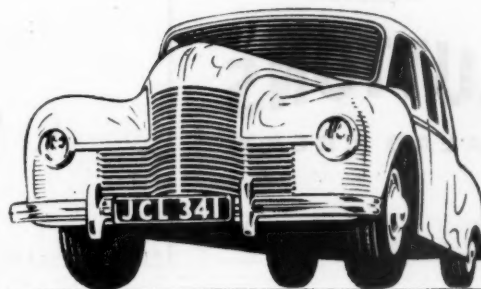
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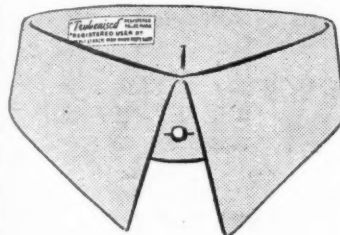
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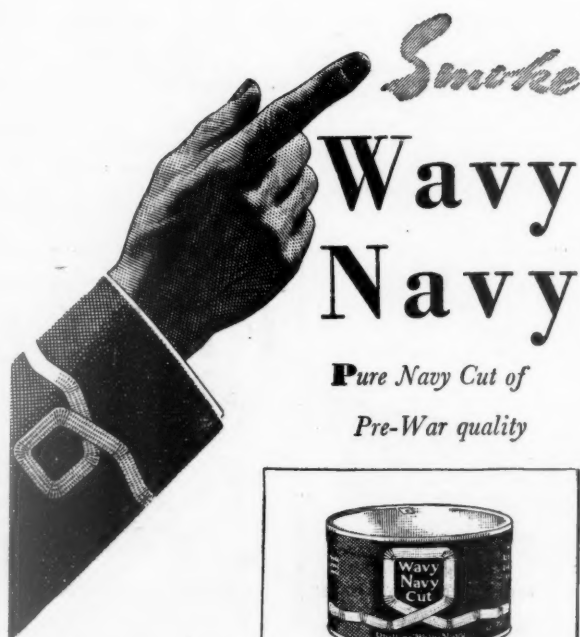
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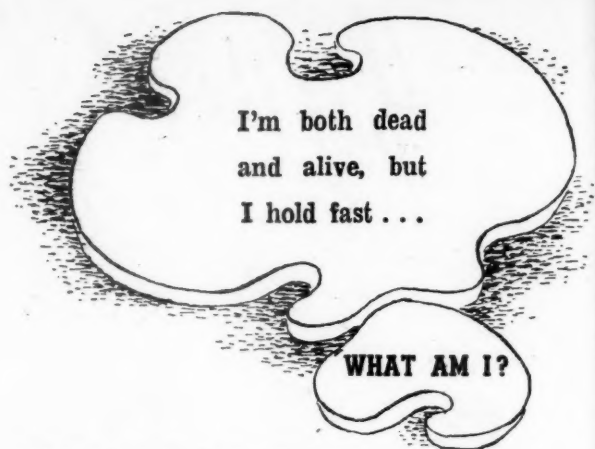


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PUNCH



On The London Charivari

Vol. CCXIII No. 5570

October 1 1947

Charivaria

LONDON was without rain for forty-three consecutive days this summer. Despite the unfavourable weather, the National Gallery never closed.

In the interests of the campaign for the elimination of waste, persons wishing to pass through a revolving door are asked to try to make up a four.



Non Sequitur

"After he told me it was off I wanted to be alone, so I went to Brighton."—*Daily Mirror*.

A Hollywood film magnate announces a reduction in stars' salaries. In some cases they will be cut down to very little more than what they really are.

According to a medical writer there has been no summer flu epidemic this year. A few cases of the new austerity cold have, however, been reported.

Here Come the Horse Marines!

"The Solomons, north-east of Australia, are a British protectorate. The Colonial Office announced this week that the aircraft carrier Theseus and the destroyer Cockade had been ordered to Guadalcanal Island to 'show the Nag' to restive natives."—*East Anglian paper*.

According to a psychologist the best way to get an unpleasantness off one's mind is to write a strong letter about it and then tear it up. Collectors of income-tax have been using fifty per cent. of this method for years.



The latest burglar alarm sends a message to Scotland Yard and photographs the intruder. Then it makes him a cup of tea.

"Despite Government promises of more farm machinery and spares, it is almost impossible to obtain ploughshares, without which the ground cannot be prepared for next year's sorely needed crops."—*Letter to "Daily Telegraph"*.

Where are the swords of yesteryear?

"Owing to black-market activities," writes a columnist, "there is now a special watch for smugglers at the London Docks." This seems absurd when so many of them bring dozens of their own.

A detective inspector who weighs eighteen stone has just retired. They say he was the best shadow in the force.

An M.P. suggests an undersea cable to import surplus hydro-electricity from Norway. He thinks it would provide several million Norse-power.

A correspondent says he never suffers from sea-sickness on a Cross-Channel trip until the last minutes before reaching France. Then it is practically *mal-de-mer*.

Shooting-sticks are scarce and expensive. We understand, however, that an enterprising society weekly hires them out on the moors for photographic purposes.



Both Their Houses

I LIKE to have two anxieties a week. To have more confuses the mind and leads to a sloppy condition of general worrying which in extreme cases may end up in a "don't care" attitude, or in drink. To have less is scarcely practicable, at any rate for a man with a tidy mind who likes to get through a year's worrying in a twelve-month. It's the people who shrug their shoulders and think about something else that get so nasty and have all these breakdowns around Christmas time.

This week I am worrying about whether the coke will come and about Congress. The latter is the nobler worry, for the fate of all Europe depends upon it, but the former takes up more of my time. I explain this by the fact that I can do something about the coke. I can go out into the road, for instance, and look this way and that to see if it is coming. It is not much, but it is something; and the exercise and the utter absence of traffic keep the anxiety fresh in my mind. But I can do nothing about Congress. I cannot go and reason with them, for the Government will not let me out of the country—unless I sign a declaration that my journey is for the purpose of organized sport or in the interests of culture, and that I will not do. I cannot send them money, for the post office would detect the metal strips inside my envelopes by means of radar and I should be dragged away and cast into gaol along with the rest of the aristocracy. I do not know whether to be more surprised at such a misuse of radar, which saved us all in 1940, or at the regulation which forbids me to send money abroad when everybody knows that foreigners won't touch pound notes with a barge-pole, preferring something negotiable. But I hope it is clear enough that my object in sending money to Congress, could I do so, would not be to buy their votes (and I have no reason to believe them corruptible) but to let them handle a pound note and see what they could get for it in the open market. This, I believe, would show them that Europe is in need of public assistance.

I cannot even write them a friendly letter pointing out that if they let me have a lot of money I shall be encouraged to hew more coal which I shall then send to Denmark in exchange for eggs. They would soon see how this would benefit them in the long run, but the difficulty about writing is that Congress is not sitting and the names and addresses of individual members are not given in *Whitaker's Almanack*. So I am compelled to do nothing whatever about Congress, except to worry about what they are going to do in a large, vague way, much as one worries about Russia.

It would be better if I had a more accurate conception

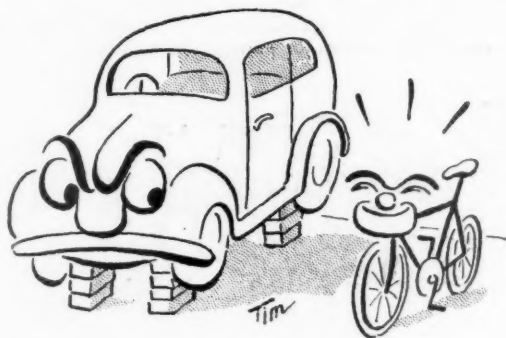
of what Congress is like and what it does. The unknown is always formidable. When I worry about coke I know exactly what I am worrying about. I know the feel of it and the weight of it and the way it coagulates into reddish-blue lumps when it gets heated. But I know none of these things about Congress. All I know absolutely for certain about it is that whenever the President has a plan for averting immediate and overwhelming disaster, either at home or abroad, Congress is said by authoritative circles in Washington to be bitterly opposed to it. This gives me a low view of Congress and I marvel that the United States has survived such an incubus for so long.

When I am worrying about Congress my mental picture of it, as opposed to any accurate knowledge, is tolerably clear. Its members sit in a circular building on stepped-up benches, with desks in front of them. They are all called Senator and they are all exactly alike. They have close-cropped white hair, strong clean-shaven faces and thick necks, and their powerfully-built bodies are clothed in light-grey suitings of some smooth material. They sit quite motionless, not speaking, content to wait until some urgent message arrives from the White House. When the President's letter is brought in, and the reading begins from the long table that occupies one end of the Chamber, one or two of the younger Senators lean forward, as though to listen, but the ripple of excitement soon dies away, and the message is heard in silence to the end. The President's requirement is quite explicit. Unless, he says, the price of meat is pegged at eighty-six pence, living costs will rocket throughout the States, industrial unrest will paralyse the production machine, Europe will be thrown into the melting-pot and the last bulwarks against the onrush of communism will be torn away. The issue is indeed so clear, as the President puts it, that no discussion is thought necessary. Senator Broody, from Idaho, speaks for fifty-seven hours without stopping, mostly on general subjects, but that is all. A vote is taken and the President's request unhesitatingly rejected. Congress then adjourns to prepare for the triennial elections in which forty per cent. of its members submit themselves for re-election for a term of from two to six years. "My programme," they say to the electors, "is to block that President, no matter what he tries to do." And the same people who will later re-elect the President, send the Senators back to office with a thumping majority.

What convinces me that this picture of Congress I have in my mind is all wrong is the fact, generally acknowledged to be true, that there are two quite distinct components of Congress, a Senate and a House of Representatives, whose legislation the President vetoes impartially from day to day. This makes nonsense of the idea that everyone in Congress is called Senator. It also makes me wonder to which House the President sends his letter, unless he has two copies made, which seems to smack a bit too much of the circular. And this in turn leads me to ask why my newspaper always talks about "Congress" doing this or that, or rather refusing to do it, as if the two Houses all sat together in one building and spoke with one voice, bar the one or two who might have slipped out to get themselves re-elected for another five or six years. But of course it may be that they do get together when someone tips them off that the President is busy on another letter. They may coagulate, I mean, when they get heated.

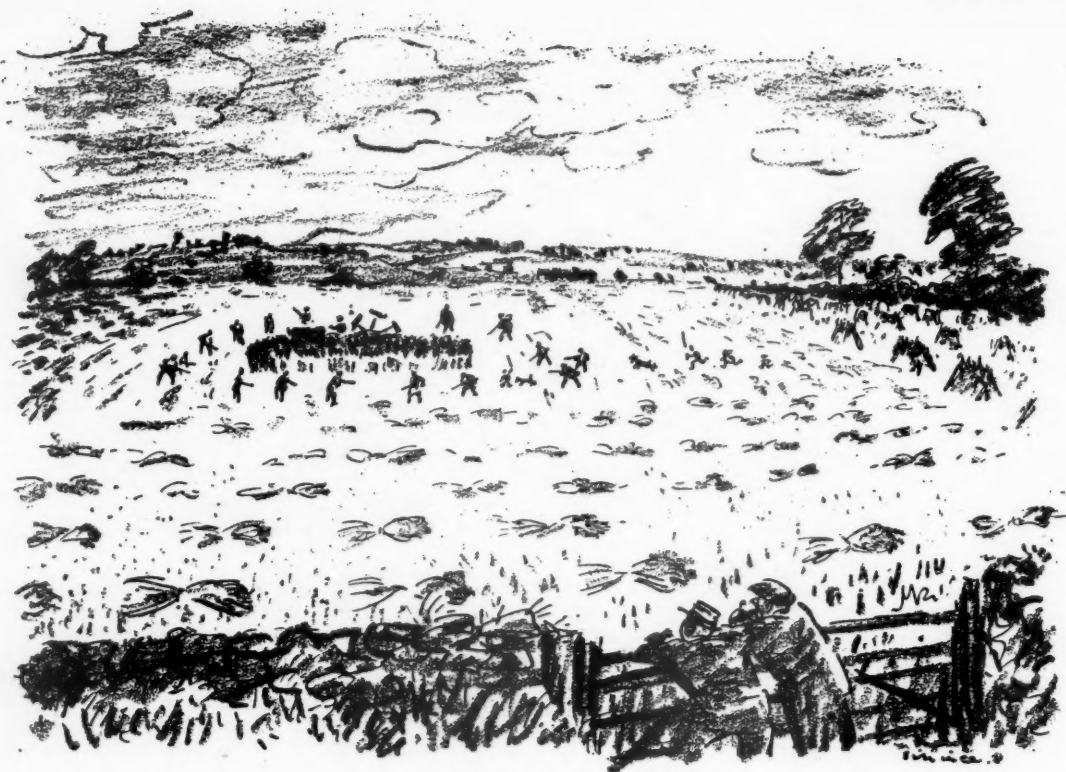
This takes me back to worrying about coke, and there I shall stay, if nobody minds, for the rest of the week. It seems to me I'm better at it.

H. F. E.





PREPARING TO BE A BEAUTIFUL BUTTERFLY



"Talk about a war of nerves!"

A Boo to End Boos

THE ancient bicker about the right to boo in the theatre has broken out again. Two critics bravely denounced the behaviour of the very "gods" as "boorish" at a First Night. The critics in their turn were heavily rebuked in a leading article, which seemed to take the line that the right to boo was a constitutional bulwark comparable to the Freedom of the Press. Other citizens wrote the usual slick little letters saying "Yah! If it is right to clap, showing pleasure, surely the audience should have some way of showing its disapproval. Applause interrupts the performance as much as an honest boo: why should actors object to one but not the other?"

At the risk of being torn to pieces or being run over by a leading article this column confesses that it is on the side of the two critics. The easy logic of the pro-boosers has surely led them astray. It is not a question of free speech but of good manners. The favourable audience does not applaud in the middle of the tender, quiet

dramatic scene: if it did it would be just as objectionable as the booser. And it is not the actors only who deserve consideration but the rest of the audience, who may be enjoying what the "god" does not and have paid their money for "quiet enjoyment." A man may dislike very much the opinions expressed in a book that he borrows from a public library, or a newspaper picked up at his club, but that does not entitle him to tear the newspaper across or scribble angry comments in the book. Many citizens have æsthetic objections to many of the statues and public buildings in the town. It is not much use to boo at a statue or even to pass it by with noticeable disdain. But one could express oneself emphatically by smearing it with paint or tar, by knocking the face about, or making a few amendments with hammer and chisel. An old-fashioned, undemocratic convention discourages such criticism, and perhaps it is just as well. Many worshippers have disagreed with the sermon; but few have greeted the

peroration with a boo. For there is no contract, in church any more than in a theatre, that the listener shall hear only that which pleases him. His remedy, in each case, is the same, to stay away—or to express his displeasure in writing.

The pro-booser leading article reminded us, as the judges have often declared, that the right of criticism belongs to every citizen and is not confined to the professional critic. That is quite correct. The "gods" are just as well entitled as the most learned critic to write to the papers and say that the play is bosh, the fruit of a gross conspiracy to annoy the public. Or, if they like, they can write wounding letters to the management; and these will be duly passed on to the author, though not, probably, to the actors. But the booser is erecting himself into a super-critic. He is the only one who knows: not only does he know more than the management, the author, and the critics—he knows more than the rest of the audience who are sitting quiet, or even applauding. And

he is claiming the privilege to express his opinion in a manner denied to them by their good manners.

Moreover, the booing critic is a bad critic. That is self-evident: for he does not, he cannot, discharge two of the chief duties of a critic—to be clear, and to be fair. When the first boo is heard no one can tell to whom or to what the subtle comment is directed. Is it the manager who bought the play and risked his money on it? Is it the producer who rehearsed it, the author who wrote it, or the actors who performed it? The objection may be æsthetic or political. The boomer may be morally shocked or maddened by some slighting reference to Russia or the Government. Most often it is the author who is held to be responsible for everything. Sometimes the "god" graciously lets it be known that he has the author in mind and that the actors are acquitted. But this may be most unfair. Suppose the author came on to the stage and shouted skyward: "Sir, I absolutely agree with you. But, excuse me, you're booing up the wrong tree. As a matter of fact this is quite a good play. If it wasn't nobody would have bought it, for even managers are not quite such fools as you think. But from first to last everything has gone wrong. We couldn't get the producer we wanted, and Mr. Beetle, though a very good chap and able, in his limited way, has never really understood what the play was about. Then—I don't want to wound my good friends the actors. They've done their best; but, as you've seen—or rather, as you haven't seen—almost every part has been hopelessly miscast. (You couldn't know, of course, that poor Miss Mott has severe stomach-trouble. And Mr. Track is suffering agonies from an impacted wisdom-tooth.) The scenery and costumes may not come up to your standard—they certainly aren't what *I* imagined; but then, what can you expect when there's a shortage of everything and the Government take 30 per cent. of everything the public pay into the till? If you chaps up there, by the way, would yell 'Down with the Entertainment Tax' at the end of every performance, you might do some good. However, all that's part of the game, and we're not squealing. The only thing that does upset me is that you should sit up there in your abysmal—I beg pardon, your celestial ignorance and bronchially boo at me!"

Suppose all that. "What very bad form!" everyone would say, not least the boomer. And yet, sometimes—who knows?—it may have been true.

This column is perhaps less well qualified to speak about the sporting boo—the boo at cricket, football or boxing. But on principle there seem to be as many good reasons against it, perhaps more. Either you boo your own side, or the other side. If you boo your own side, you do it presumably to make them do better. There can be no other object. You cannot get a bad left half-back exchanged for a good one by persistent booing. You have to suffer the one you've got to the end. Now, it is very likely that he is just as well aware as you are of the mistakes he has already made. It is a fair guess that he is trying to do better. Probably, like most public performers, he is sensitive and nervous. The question for you to consider, chum, is this: Are you likely to make the poor fish do better by yelling it into his head that he has incurred the malignant hostility of thousands of his supporters? Think it over, pal.

If, on the other hand, you are booing the other side it must be (a) because they are beating your side or (b) because you think they are behaving badly. The first, of course, is out of the question: for we are discussing the "sporting boo". It must be that you think that the other side, or some or one of them, are behaving badly. But on the field of sport, chum, you have what you have not got in the theatre, an umpire or referee, an official whose business it is to see that nobody behaves badly, without correction. You are therefore usurping the functions of the referee—or as they say in Parliament, "reflecting on the Chair"—a thing no sportsman would do (or would he?). But perhaps you will say that the enemy half-back or bowler or three-quarter is doing nothing *technically* wrong, and so the referee cannot put him right. But he is offending against the *spirit* of the game, in other words, he is being



"... between Haywards Heath and Halifax a bottle containing some small tablets of saccharin which, should it fall into unsuspecting hands, might be mistaken for tablets of phenobarbitone."

unsporting: and this is where you, the supreme arbiter of sportsmanship, come in—with a loud fierce boo. The other day, this column sees, you booed one of our Australian guests when he was taking place-kicks, because, being a heavy man, he tackled heavily. But what do you suggest? Are other teams to bring only small-sized men against us? And if they do bring heavy men, are they to tackle delicately, with one hand only, not using the body? Like the god in the gallery, you are setting yourself up as the one All-Knowing, All-Wise. But how much do you know? You boo the enemy batsman because he is scoring slowly and defends his wicket tenaciously. Has it occurred to you that he has probably had orders from his captain to play that way? And who are you to boo, anyway, anywhere? Have you ever played the game? No. Yet you presume to be a kind of Umpire-in-chief on all the fine points of play and sportsmanship. Well, well. But there are some who know more about the game than even you. The players, for example. That chap in the long-field is just as bored as you are by all this stone-walling. But he does not boo. The Rugby forward on your side may feel as strongly as you about that last tackle. But he does not boo. Why should you? Oh, because you have paid to see a game, and you insist that it shall be the kind of game you want to see? What do you do when you are not booing? A house-painter? Well, no doubt you are a good house-painter. But your work is paid for by the owner of the house. Is he entitled to boo you at your work? He might come in, for example, when you were putting on an under-coat and suppose, mistaken ass, that you were at the final stage. What would you say if he gave you a long loud boo? When you recovered your speech you would say that you were responsible only to your boss. So is the batsman, so is the half-back. You may say that there is a good deal of a kind of booing in the House of Commons. So there is—and far too much—another sad sign of the times. But at least the person booed or barracked there can answer back. The batsman can't, the half-back can't. Consider that, little sportsman. Consider that, you inflated shrimp. If you ask this column's candid opinion you are a blot on any institution which attracts you. Boo!

A. P. H.

H'm

"BATHING COSTUMES ARE BANNED"
Headline, Daily paper.

At the Pictures

Deception—Sortilèges—Desert Fury

JOHN COLLIER is named as one of the writers responsible for *Deception* (Director: IRVING RAPPER), but—if this is, as I suppose, the Mr.

sardonic, possessive character, "the composer Hollenius" who provides the 'cello concerto that the unknown, talented young 'cellist (PAUL HENREID)



J.H.D.W.

[Deception]

HARMONY

Karel Novak PAUL HENREID
Hollenius CLAUDE RAINS

COLLIER we know as a novelist—the film does not show much that is characteristic of him except an uneasy little passage of dialogue towards the end in which a man about to be murdered observes with curiosity that although he has always had a very strong sense of what is to come, of what he will be doing to-morrow, he now seems to have lost it. If this was not Mr. COLLIER's idea, it is certainly his sort of idea . . . As a whole, the picture cannot sound very promising in outline to anyone as sick of the Hollywood music-in-opulent-surroundings story as I am; there is even another of those perishing concertos, though it's a 'cello one for a change (and though the film begins with a very welcome and pleasing bit of one by Haydn). But I found it remarkably entertaining. It is nominally a Bette Davis picture, and Miss DAVIS does her tense, tearful best with an empty part, but CLAUDE RAINS runs away with the show as a "great man," Hollywood's notion of a musical genius, an immensely wealthy, dictatorial,

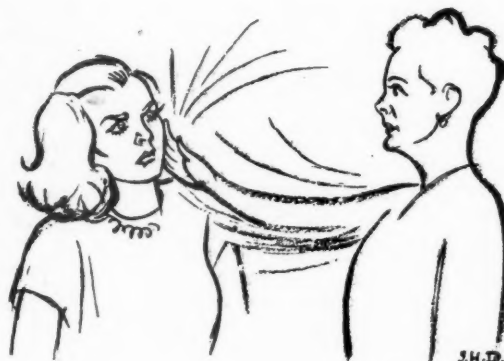
makes his name by playing. The murder, not the performance of the concerto, is the dramatic climax; but the picture ends where most murder pictures would begin, leaving you to argue about what probably happened to the overwrought lady (Miss DAVIS) who fired the fatal shot. If you insist upon leaving the cinema quite sure of the resolution of a film's problem you would do well to avoid *Deception*; but if you do you will miss a lot of quite civilized, amusing dialogue and some brilliant acting. Another notable point is that—mostly by skilful cutting, but partly too I imagine by intensive rehearsal—the people supposed to be playing musical instruments actually look as if they might be playing them.

Not often can one accuse a French film of lack of restraint; which makes the almost comic piling-on of the melodrama towards the end of *Sortilèges* (Director: CHRISTIAN JACQUE) all the more noticeable. This, to be sure, is a matter of plot, and the plot is from a novel (*Le Cavalier de Rion Clare*, by CLAUDE BONCOMPAIN); it may be that in the original the successive violences of the chase, the staged seduction scene, the fight, the fire, the hanging of the villain from his bell-rope, his escape, his flight, and his death did not follow each other with quite such brisk, fire-cracker vehemence. Before this, which is all packed into

the last part of the film, there has been much that is valuable in the customary French way; characters and incidents that in summary sound overdone (the mountain Bellman who has designs on the innocent girl—the ignorant villagers who believe him a sorcerer—the girl's half-witted father—the murder in the snow—the victim's black horse that terrorizes the neighbourhood) have been freshened and made almost credible by clever, exuberant playing and interesting photography. But this is not in the top flight of French films.

From the title, and the Technicolor, and the scenery, and various other hints in *Desert Fury* (Director: LEWIS ALLEN) I get the perhaps fanciful notion that it is another in what I foresee as a "cycle" of pictures profoundly influenced by or modelled on *Duel in the Sun*. A rehash, let us say, of *Duel in the Sun* for people who want present-day fashions and cars, and not so much obvious sex, and a happy ending . . . However, the motives of the people concerned are more obscure, and almost every emotional scene seems for some reason to end in the smart slapping of somebody's face. Another recurring pattern is the rhythm of the dialogue: the curt tight-lipped back-and-forth growl very nearly has one looking rhythmically from side to side like a spectator at Wimbledon. The basic idea again is of a girl and two men, one good, one bad; but this time the girl isn't particularly bad herself and is allowed the good man in the end. MARY ASTOR has the best of it all as the elegant strong-minded mother of this problem child (LIZABETH SCOTT); JOHN HODIAK is the bad man, described as a gambler.

R. M.



J.H.D.

[Desert Fury]

MORE SLAPPING

Paula Haller LIZABETH SCOTT
Fritzi Haller MARY ASTOR

Fixpence

IF there is any one thing on the road that will cause me to brake hard, pull in, and dismount briskly from my bicycle, it is the sight of an old-fashioned kerbside bookstall. I mean the kind, now so rare, that displays a mountain of ancient books in calf, their pages freckled with ox-tail soup, and covers that drop off when you open them.

Only the other day I was churning over the books on such a stall. I had burrowed fairly deeply at one spot, about two spits, when I heard a beautiful, flute-like whistling close by. I withdrew my head in admiration—it was the owner of the stall. He was poring over one of his ancient books, his eyes round with dismay. The notes trilled on, their purity marred only when he turned a page and its edge ploughed through his moustache.

"How much is this book?" I asked.

"Fixpence," he said, without looking up.

"Did you say sixpence?" I said, giving him a sharp look.

"Yes—fixpence."

I sucked my breath in sharply, but made no comment. His face paled with consternation, but the whistling rose to a glorious crescendo.

"You have a remarkably fine tone," I observed, closely watching the perfect circle of his lips, which pulsed like a sensitive rubber ring in torment.

"I whistle to keep me pecker up," he said.

"You mean 'whistle,' of course," I said sharply. "An excellent idea. We must not allow the crisis to depress us unduly."

"It ain't the crisis," he said. "It's this 'ere book."

"Then why read it?"

"I dipped into it when my uncle left me the barrer, not long ago," he said sadly. "Now I find it draws me on. Nothing but horrors."

"Why—it's a history," I said, peeping over his shoulder. "Published 1728. Very fine condition."

"That's more than I am," he grumbled. "I like a book with a happy ending. You read this bit 'ere."

I adjusted my pince-nez and glanced over it. It was printed in that curious old type which uses a thing shaped like an "f" for the letter "s." I made a note to explain this to him.

"Whereupon" (I read) "a moft cruel War enfued, and he met with a signal Overthrow in a Battel. Upon his return home, he found great Confufion and Diforder. He burthened the People with an extraordinary Tax, and

met with many Commotions and Troubles. At laft, worn out by Care and Calamity, he fell fick and died."

"There you are!" cried the bookseller. "There's another character gone. They *all* fall fick and die in this book. Thank goodness I've nearly got to the end of it."

"But this is only volume one," I said.

"D'you mean there's more of it?" His voice trembled.

"Certainly. When this book was written they thought nothing of going to eight or nine volumes."

"Eight or nine?" he whispered with dry lips. "Where's the others then?"

"Very likely among the pile on this barrow."

He tried to whistle again while I fished about for a likely-looking book, but his lips froze with horror.

"This looks like volume three," I said, diving into a cavity among the books. He peered into it and recoiled.

"Are they all—Battels and Confufions?" he asked.

"Pretty well. They vary."

"What else?" he whispered.

"Well, there's the Black Death."

"What—in my barrer?"

"Quite likely. The whole thing goes on for hundreds of years."

"And no happy ending?"

"Hang it, man," I cried irritably, "this is history. You can't expect a happy ending."

"Why not?" he asked.

"Because the thing isn't finished

yet," I shouted, losing my temper. "It's still being written."

The man's insistence annoyed me, and I turned and angrily pumped up the back tyre of my bicycle until I felt better.

"Who's writing it?" he asked.

"Why, in a sense, Parliament is writing it," I said facetiously.

"What—at Westminfter?"

I nodded, and he seized the handles of his barrow.

"I won't have it," he cried. "I'm going to take all this Hiftory to Westminfter."

"Whatever for?"

"I'm going to tell 'em to write it different."

"By Jove, you've got something there!" I cried, snapping on my clips. "I'll accompany you."

"I'm going to tell 'em I want a happy ending."

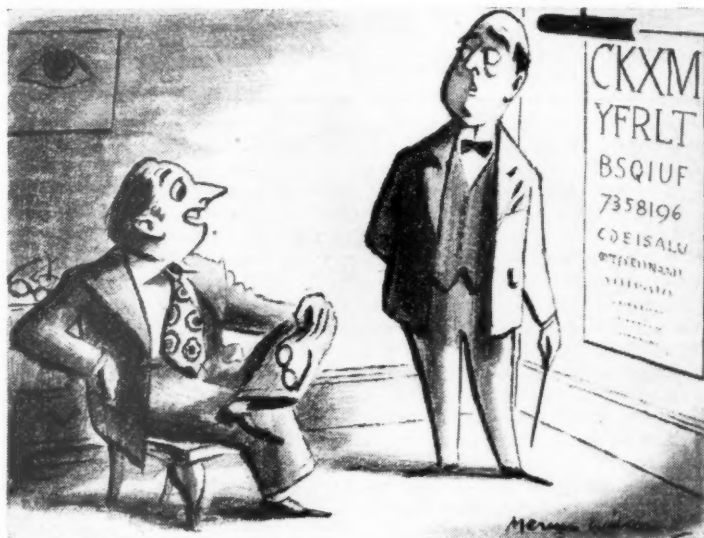
"Splendid. Be very firm about it."

"And no Battels or Confufions."

"Exactly. And no extraordinary taxes."

He slowly moved away with his barrow in the direction of Westminster, and I swung round my bicycle and leaped into the saddle. It was a great Occafion, as the Hiftory book has it.

Unfortunately my front Wheel hit a large book still lying in the road, and I was unable to follow him. I had a signal Overthrow and rent my Troufers—curfe it!



"Who on earth writes your scripts?"



"Do you mind if I switch over to the Home Service for the nine o'clock restrictions?"

Numbers

ONE of my readers—the one to whom the days of the week are railway sleepers, with a hedge every Sunday—has written to suggest that I might do a piece about numbers; which, by the way, this same reader sees as a pattern which other readers who go in for mental tape-measures and moving staircases would agree with me is a funny way to think of numbers. However, as I have pointed out before, different people think differently; and psychologists say that we have no idea what goes on in the mind of the average person trying to add sixty-four to ninety-seven quicker than someone else, and nor have they either.

It would be as well to begin with some words on numbers in general. The first number is of course one, or 1, or even I. Assuming that numbers go from left to right—which they do in print, anyway—to the right of 1 we have 2, 3, 4 and so on up to 9, and after that a one and a nought which are not thought of as such because they are pronounced ten. Next comes eleven. I think that the public has got the idea by now and can carry on by itself. Returning to the extreme left, we are faced with the problem of what happens before the figure 1. On the whole, in the public's mind, nothing does happen; some mental tape-measures consciously include a nought, but at one the public's responsibility ceases. No mental tape-measure, as far as psychologists know, is laid out to include minus anything, and the average mind, when asked to deal with minus fifty, is ill-equipped to do more than hop along to the right for an ordinary fifty and add a dash. Typists are even iller-equipped, for if they want to do the thing properly they must manoeuvre the underlining line into mid-air; but to make up for this, they can, if they wish, type $\frac{1}{2}$ simply by hitting the right key, or, equally simply, by hitting the wrong one.

NOW for some individual numbers. Twelve, for example, is quite a character. Being known also as a dozen it is a far rounder number than ten, and scones that cost a penny-halfpenny each may be found, if you buy a dozen, to cost one-and-six, which is still a penny-halfpenny each, whereas people buying ten scones never expect them to cost anything but ten times as much as one scone. Twelve is also as much as public clocks can strike without getting into the newspapers, as many boxes of matches as anyone hopes to buy at once and the number of dozens that make a gross—a quantity little bandied about by ordinary people, because ordinary people, the sort to whom a carton is something they wish they had when making up a parcel, rarely come into contact with a hundred and forty-four of anything. Fifty-one is three times seventeen, and a good example of the way people think they will remember which page they stopped reading at. Pretty well everyone knows 112 as the number of pounds in a hundredweight, and a hundredweight is known to an equally wide public as what coal weighs; while the figure 100 is a very well-known number indeed, especially nowadays when people's opinions add up to it. Of the other numbers which have made a place for themselves in the world I have space only for the numbers on front doors, numbers which their owners almost believe they have grown themselves.

Fractions, those two-storied affairs of which $\frac{1}{2}$ is a modest example, have quite an effect on life. Most people learn to write fractions with the dividing line on, as it were, sea-level, and as they get older they move the line up to show emancipation; but only when they are being chatty, for example telling a correspondent that $\frac{1}{2}$ a loaf is better than no bread. When the public has to do sums with fractions, to cross out the bits that go into the other bits, its past arithmetic lessons fairly rush back and it is amazed to find that it can still remember how to divide, by which I mean can remember how to put a dot each side of a stroke. Few ordinary people can multiply or divide fractions without feeling cleverer than other ordinary people, and few can add them without thinking for a moment that they don't know how.

Fractions are the opposite of decimals because decimals are another way of doing fractions, and, to the people who fancy themselves as fraction-doers, the wrong way. Statisticians say that more people than they had hoped face the world in later life with no better idea of how to multiply $\cdot 5167$ by $\cdot 015$ than a dim belief that commonsense will prevail; but that, on the other hand, everyone remembers the decimal version of one-third as a notable instance of arithmetic falling down on the job.

I MUST deal now with flat-topped threes and fives in one piece. They are not necessarily produced by the same section of the public, but they may be because both are the result of having been taught to write a figure in a certain way and having failed to notice that at a certain stage in its development humanity humps up the tops of its threes and leaves the lid of the five till the last. The result, with these people, is a three sort of jagged all over, and a five like an S. The five especially depresses them every time they see it coming up looking the same as last time. As a contrast we have those bold folk who write the figure four all joined up, like a triangle with bits sticking out, and are presumably not afraid to write backwards if the result justifies it. There is also a section of the public which to be correct writes a thousand as 1,000 and another which, to be modern, writes it as 1000 but recants when it gets to millions. The subtle shades of opinion which lead to people writing £4.13.11 and thinking that £4.13s.11d. would have looked nicer do not concern



"... so we turned it into a smoking den for Arthur."

us here, nor do the people who notice that other people signify August 3rd by writing 3rd August; but, talking of dates, I do want to say how nothing brings home the fleeting of the year more poignantly than deciding to write the whole date in figures and realizing that with October we have reached 10; unless it is the realization that any month is a higher number than the month before it.

I THINK I shall end with a bit about telephone numbers. A telephone number is a random collection of numbers assigned to us by a branch of Fate; at least it starts by being random but in a very short time will have come to describe our own particular telephone exactly and ourselves not quite so exactly. There will always be people who are not quite satisfied with the impression their telephone gives to outsiders and still think sadly of one they had, years ago, which might have been made for them. But on the whole people do manage to make quite friends of their number, to share their telephone's pride in having its very own number typed, however faintly, across its chest, and to consider anyone with the same number as a mixture of impostor and coincidence. This is when they meet it in ordinary life. I don't really need to say that when they meet it, by being rung up by some oaf who has got the wrong exchange they react differently, I mean the same as anyone who has downed a half-potato and run brightly upstairs to no purpose.

And finally the people who happen to meet someone with the same telephone number as theirs, only backwards, are worth mentioning for their inability to see that they are talking to someone to whom this backwards number is forwards; and for the fact that psychologists compare them, without comment, with the people who live in semi-detached houses—each house wondering like mad how those crazy people next door manage with everything inside out.

Public Notice

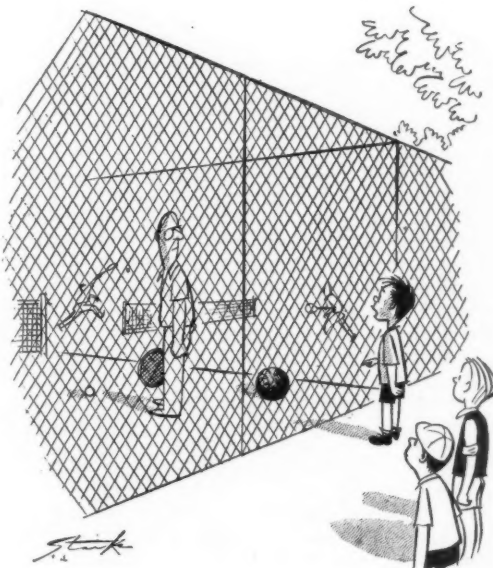
WHEREAS the premises formerly known as the Opera House are scheduled for conversion into flats, the council and Mr. Tingle will be glad if intending tenants will leave the final division to the selection board. This applies most to those who want their flat next to the bars, and it does not seem to shake them when it is explained that these will be bathrooms. People who refuse to go in the Pit need have no fear, as this part will be the quadrangle when the dome has been taken off, and the circles will be common verandahs. Explaining this by phone has caused many people to think a South American film actress was coming here, so it has been thought best to spell it in black and white. The day of the building as a haunt of stars is over, and this is specially pointed out to the numerous applicants who mix their housing appeals with descriptions of their talented children. In the interests of keeping the peace, the board have tried to keep the trainee singers and musicians down. It would make the project too expensive if sound-proofing were carried out, as the old shell of the building was just the opposite, both ways. The cultural decline which has given this chance of accommodation deserves full support if not approval.

Applicants who are allocated to the dressing-room part will come nearest to getting a stage part, but the latter is to be converted so as not to institute an annoyance to the auditorium tenants. It will either have the overhead ropes made into a clothes-line network, or else the iron curtain will be screwed down and the area made into a nursery. This would dispose of the children, but adults offering to help with the conversion are also warned not to build false hopes of careers as stage carpenters.

J. TINGLE,
Flat Rate Officer.

Austerity

"The two and a half inch skirt is being exported to European and eastern countries."—"The Star."





"If you could persuade Aunt Ermyntude to give up her room, I reckon we could solve this winter's fuel problem."

Computation

"I AM astonished to see," said my wife, stretching her feet a little further towards the fire, "that Doctor Tigwold has a new car. A very impressive affair, so expensively unostentatious that its full significance does not strike you until some moments after it has poured itself by. Then you give vent to an envious sigh."

She gave vent to one of these. "It must have cost a packet," I said; and I believe I spoke morosely.

"That's what I can't understand. How on earth does he afford it?"

"He has a very large practice."

"But he never sends in a bill. The Walkers were only remarking on the same fact the other night. He's attended them for years and charged them nothing."

"Do you mean they never pay him?"

"Well, I suppose they send him a little something from time to time.

Apparently he just accepts what people feel like giving him—if anything. It's all frightfully unbusiness-like."

"But I can't imagine how he carries on," I said. "How does he keep up that large house?"

"It's extraordinary."

"He just works for the love of it—and struggles along as best he can?"

"Yes."

"Amazing."

"Yes."

"A very good man."

"Yes."

"But no head for business?"

"None at all."

"Hasn't he sent in a bill for that time I was laid up with flu?"

"No."

"Have you asked him about it?"

"Yes. Twice. He just tut-tutted it away."

"But that's absurd. The man has to live like the rest of us. I mean we can't trespass on his generosity like that."

"Another case of the willing horse, I suppose. It's a shame. And he has three children to support."

"They all go to first-rate schools."

"Still, it's a shame. He must find it a great struggle to keep going. People must take advantage of him terribly."

"Send him a cheque."

"I'll send it to-night; it will be quite a weight off my conscience. How often did he come to see you?"

"Twice."

"Surely it was more than that. He called at least four times."

"Yes, perhaps you're right. And there was that Sunday night."

"That was the time he came to borrow the roller."

Rule, Britannia, Britannia rule the waves; Britons never, NEVER, NEVER—

Young man—



shall . . . be . . . slaves . . .



except, of course, to the Home Office, the Ministry of Fuel and Power—



the Ministries of Health, Labour, Education, Transport, Town and Country Planning, and Supply—

"But he had a look at me at the same time."

"Then it was five visits in all."

"Call it half a dozen."

"Six visits at seven and sixpence."

"How much is that?"

"Are you sure he charges seven and sixpence?"

"They usually do."

"That man who treated you in Leamington charged half a guinea."

"But that was Leamington."

"Well, this is Bognor Regis."

"All right. Make it six at half a guinea. Better to be on the safe side. He's the sort who would never let you know if we did underpay."

"Generous to a fault."

"But no business head."

"You'd think his wife would see to it."

"A fine woman, but unworldly."

"No money sense?"

"Absolutely none. Well, that's three guineas. Then, didn't you go down to him once or twice when you were getting better?"

"Yes, I went once, and he said I was all right."

"But you went again—one evening."

"That was the time he invited me in for a drink."

"But he examined you afterwards, didn't he?"

"He asked me if I was feeling quite fit again."

"We'll call that two visits then. Two at five shillings."

"Why five bob?"

"That's what I paid last year when I went with my arm."

"But everything has gone up since then. Look at the laundry."

"And greenstuff."

"Make it seven-and-six, eh?"

"That will be fifteen bob."

"Plus three guineas; that's three pounds eighteen shillings. Say four pounds."

"He's really been very good to us. And he has those three fine boys. How about making it a fiver?"

"Send him five guineas; it looks more professional."

"A good doctor," said my wife, reaching for the cheque-book. "But no head for business."

"None," I said. "None at all."

Wouldn't you wonder how he can manage a new car?

Now It Can Be Told.

IT is within a few minutes of high noon (2 P.M. D.B.S.T. to you!) on Midsummer Day.

The pavements of the noisy street, sweltering in the sun, are hot to the feet, and the shoppers look limp.

Quietly, a Government department van draws up next to a bus-stop, and from it descend a number of officials. One carries a sextant; one, a sun and heat registering-meter; another a queer looking meter for registering noise, while yet another carries a pot of paint and a small brush.

The officials go about their work silently and efficiently, seeking a spot on the pavement which will register the maximum on each of their meters. Having found it, they then signal to the man with the sextant. The latter carefully adjusts his instrument, makes some calculations in a book, then stands silent. Suddenly he calls out, "Noon!" and the others feverishly check their meters, then nod happily.

The man with the paint pot now comes into action, and with four swift strokes of his brush marks a white square on the pavement at the spot where the heat is greatest, the sun most glaring and the noise the loudest and most penetrating.

A telephone-kiosk has been sited.



to the Admiralty, War Office, and Air Ministry, the Board of Trade, AND the Commissioners of Inland Revenue—



to Local Authorities of every shape and size, and, last but certainly not least—



to the wireless set in the flat below.



"Who's winning?"
 "No one ain't—she won't come out!"

Le Roi S'Amuse

JOVE gazed
 On woven mazes
 Of patterned movement as the atoms whirled;
 His glance turned
 Into dancing, burning
 Colour-gods who rushed upon the sullen world,
 Ravaging, savaging, creating it anew—
 Silver and purple, shrill-voiced yellow, turgid crimson,
 and virgin blue.

Jove stared
 On overbearing
 And aching splendour of the naked rocks;
 Where his gaze smote
 Hazily floated,
 To mount like thistledown in countless flocks,
 Fruit-loving, root-loving gods, cool and green
 Of heather and orchard, feathery grasses, pollen'd lily,
 the olive and the bean.

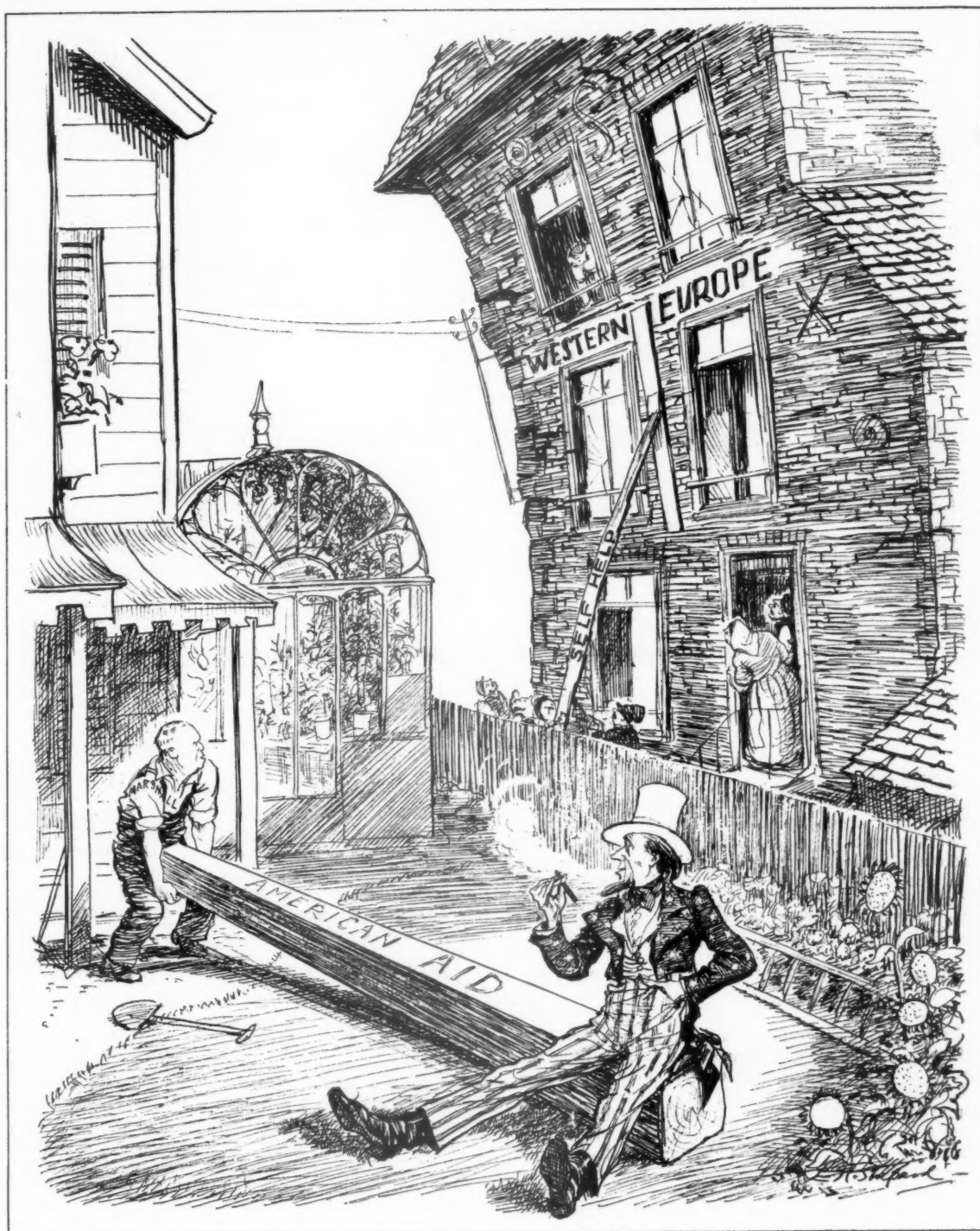
Jove laughed;
 Like cloven-shafted
 Lightning, his laughter into brightness broke.
 From every dint
 Where the severed splinters
 Had scattered, a sylvan or a satyr woke—
 Ounces came pouncing, dragon-people flew,
 There was spirited stallion, squirrel unrespectful,
 clanging raven, and kangaroo.

Jove sighed;
 The hoving tide of
 Ocean trembled at the motion of his breath.
 His sigh turned
 Into white, eternal
 Radiant Aphrodite, unafraid of death;
 A fragrance, a vagrant unrest, on earth she flung,
 There was bravery and building, and favouring and fondling,
 and chuckling music and suckling of the young.

Jove thought;
 He wove and wrought at
 A thousand clarities. From his brows sprang,
 With earnest mien,
 Stern Athene,
 The cold armour on her shoulders rang.
 Our sires at the fires of her lucid eyes began
 To speak in symbols, to seek out causes, to name the
 creatures; we became Man.

World and Man
 Unfurled their banner,
 The blazing planets on the azure field;
 Fresh-robed
 In flesh, the ennobled
 Spirits carousing in their myriads reeled;
 There was frolic and holiday; Jove smiled to see
 The abyss empeopled, his bliss imparted, the throng that
 was his and no longer he.

N. W.



NEIGHBOURS

"Come on, Sam! It's up to us again."



"Excuse me, Madame Borgia, but who gave you this prescription?"

H. J.'s Dramatic Fragments

I WROTE this Fragment for a marionette theatre the children had to start as their holiday task one Christmas. They began by sticking to oratorios as they were not very good at making the puppets move about, but there are not really very many of these and sooner or later, like so many Little Theatres, they had to fall back on Drama, and this was provided for them of course by their loving father, the Parents' Union to which he belongs binding him to join in all their pranks.

TWO HEARTS THAT BEAT AS THREE.

(The scene is a Police Station.)

DESK SERGEANT. Where did you find this parrot?

P.C. HUGHES. On a Belisha Beacon. It was inciting the crowd to sing "Take a Pair of Sparkling Eyes," so I placed it under restraint.

SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR. A call from Cell 2: the prisoner says he has finished lunch and is about to prepare his defence. He wants some guns and bullets to do experiments and a copy of Holdsworth's *History of English Law*.

DESK SERGEANT. File his request and send him *Our Noble Police*. Now I really must finish registering this lost property. We'll await a bid for the parrot. Here we have a schoolgirl's satchel containing a pencil-box, a photograph of Sir Aubrey Smith and a cyclostyled summary of the plot of "A la Recherche du Temps Perdu."

Enter a DRUNK

P.C. HUGHES. Bother, here he is again. Even by the most cunning tricks I haven't managed to shake him off.

DESK SERGEANT. Didn't you find a building with two doors and come out of the other one?

P.C. HUGHES. Yes, but apparently so did he.

DESK SERGEANT. Well, dump him on the bench and ring the Police Surgeon.

SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR. Car 12 reports a blonde moving down the High Street: they are in hot pursuit.

Enter "SPIKE" GUMMIDGE, the aged crime reporter of the local paper.

"SPIKE" GUMMIDGE. Be there any tid-bits for I? Any bad men loose in the burgh? Any felonies as would warm the cockles of a newshawk's heart?

DESK SERGEANT. There was a case of arson earlier on, but we let it go with a caution: the building was only singed. Do you know anyone who's lost a toupée marked "Made in Tahiti"?

"SPIKE" GUMMIDGE. No. How about a ticket for the Police Gala?

DESK SERGEANT. Complimentary or stalls?

Enter POLICE SURGEON

POLICE SURGEON (to "SPIKE"). Stand on one leg with your eyes shut.

"SPIKE" GUMMIDGE. Shan't.

DRUNK. Qui' ri', ole fren'.

POLICE SURGEON. Oh, it's him, is it? Hum, his breath smells of Veuve Pommery '06. Say "cricket critics."

DRUNK. Cri'cri'kks . . .

PARROT. Six Czech cricket critics. (*Laughs lightly.*)

SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR. The prisoner wants the Laws of Ine, plaster casts of the principal makes of tyre-mark, and someone to explain how blood groups work.

DESK SERGEANT. The last is your job, Surge. The other requests will be referred back. (*Exit POLICE SURGEON.*) Now the next bit of lost property is a notebook with a lot of numbers in it like 23½, 74 and 3100. Would they perhaps be atomic weights?

SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR. Someone keeps ringing up from Wakefield and asking for bail.

DESK SERGEANT. Get a firm offer and close. Really, it's time we got thinking about the Patriotic Song for the Gala. We don't want Lillibulero again.

P.C. HUGHES. I'm writing one myself. So far it has gone:

Tinplate from Neath,
Whisky from Leith,
Paper from Ilford,
Livestock from Guildford,
Gingham from Eccles,
Malt from Beccles,
Curates from Wells,
Oysters from Wells . . .

(There's one in Somerset and one in Norfolk, you know.) It's when I get on to things like Marine Insurance the difficulties are going to come thick and fast.

DRUNK. Ennui, ennui. (*Walks unsteadily out.*)

SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR. The Surgeon has gone home to look up some notes; meanwhile the prisoner wants the *Law Quarterley Review* for Jan. 1921 and the name of a reliable metallurgist.

DESK SERGEANT. I'll write to the W.V.S. Take this tear-off calendar to keep him quiet. There's a thought for every day from the American Presidents on it, with three months to go. You'd better give him a waste-paper basket too.

[*Exit P.C. HUGHES*]

SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR. Car 7 reports a smash-and-grab raid at Maison Horta. They didn't get the number of the car but they got the brick it was done with. There is a cuneiform inscription on it and a label saying "The Curator's Choice for the Week."

DESK SERGEANT. Tick them off right and proper.

SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR (*into instrument*). Tch! Tch! "SPIKE" GUMMIDGE. This be meat for headlines, sure-ly. Old Spike'll be able to buy Gala ticket for hisself now. Proper ace of a reporter, like, he be.

[*Exit keenly*]

DESK SERGEANT. Now the next item is a five-pound note and on the back is "If this note should chance to roam, box its ears and send it home."

Enter P.C. HUGHES

P.C. HUGHES. The prisoner says we're not to tamper with this parrot: it's his alibi.

FINIS



"Just now she's doing twenty to the gallon."

Water Baby

THE tatters of the sunset lingered, but the new moon was already showing against the sky. Everything was still. The willows poured sorrowfully down to the water's edge. It was a lovely evening.

I said so to Mrs. Wraithby as she peeled potatoes at the galley window of motor-launch *Lovely Mary*, and I consider that I did well to say even that; my other leg was still on the moving bows of motor-barge *Vulcan*, and the next second would have seen me split like a wishbone. But Toplady intervened with the boathook and I fell heavily on Mrs. Wraithby's poop.

"You look nice and clean to-night," said Toplady, following with more grace. He was addressing Mrs. Wraithby but speaking of the *Lovely Mary*. "My friend," he went on, "is going to learn to row." I giggled and began to lever myself up by what may have been a bollard, bringing my bald patch into Mrs. Wraithby's line of vision. "Left it a bit late, hasn't he?" she said—but Toplady turned the comment neatly with the same easy charm that had, no doubt, gained us the loan of the *Lovely Mary*'s dinghy bobbing erratically below: "Oh, I don't know; be light for another hour yet." He smiled dazzlingly, as if he had been busy getting on the right side of Nature to arrange this, and

dropped quietly over the side, calling out "We'll take very good care of her." I added "Rather!" and clawed my way down.

He affected to ignore the water that entered the boat with me, not even wringing out his sleeve. "Should I just get her clear of the craft?" he said, apparently with every expectation that the suggestion would offend me. "Do," I said, airily casting off a rope which I now saw was attached to nothing more stabilizing than our own bows. "It's just," he said, "that I happen to know the ins and outs of this bit," and a third party present (who would have had to be very small and lying flat) might have gathered from his tone that although I knew the river like the back of my hand from Gallions Reach to Sunbury I had somehow had the bad luck to miss Lacey's Moorings.

"Right-ho," said Toplady, and hesitated; then—"There's a seat behind you, if you'd rather."

"Oh, might as well." And succeeding after several nonchalant attempts in freeing my wrist from one of the rowlocks I got up from the bottom of the boat and sat on the seat.

Toplady, once clear of the colony of floating homes, pulled a nice easy stroke. I felt more comfortable now that we were under way, but noticed

that we made no great speed. Motor-boats overtook us with ease, and long after we had glided under Richmond Bridge its white arches seemed still within a stone's-throw.

"Funny thing," I said conversationally, lighting my pipe, "but from the way bits of wood and stuff whizz past us you'd think we were going quite fast."

"I'm not very good," Toplady said with a smile and a grunt.

"Oh, I don't know." It was for him to say, after all.

"The stream and the tide are against us," he said, to the rhythm of the oars.

"Ah," I said, puffing contentedly.

He was pulling strongly. For some reason a pillar of gnats whined and oscillated above his head. I reflected, watching him, that all the people who had assured me that there was nothing in rowing, including the lady who comes and sits with the baby on Tuesdays, had been telling the truth after all.

"I suppose," I said presently, puffing some smoke at Toplady's gnats, "that if the tide—"

"Could you catch that branch?" interrupted Toplady.

"Right. I—"

"Don't stand up."

I caught it at the third attempt, Toplady rowing strongly meanwhile, and there was some rather clumsy manoeuvring, I thought, before he disembarked on a flight of wet steps. "Perhaps," he said, "you'd like to take her on from here?"

"Of course," I said. My transfer into the bows was achieved fairly adroitly, but there seemed very little of the boat in front of me, sitting there.

"Right," said Toplady, getting in, and after a moment or two's pause in which laughter floated out on to the water he went on—"If you could just face the other way—"

His smile was full of confidence as he put the oars into my hands. They were at once taken out again by some unseen water creature under the boat. A seat full of middle-aged ladies glided swiftly into view on the bank. They were all smiling at me.

"Now then," said Toplady.

I pulled strongly. Once I had got the knack of putting the oars in at the proper angle it was really very simple. I went on pulling. Soon the ladies on the bank were out of sight. It was—

"On your left, old chap," said Toplady, "just to get us clear of the—"

But something went wrong. The willows that poured sorrowfully down to the water's edge scraped slowly across our faces. He snatched an oar and shoved us off. "On your left, I



"Thank you for a really wonderful evening, Mrs. Soames. So stupid of me to forget I mustn't touch crab."

said. *Now on your right.*" I pulled on my left, and the oar sprang from the rowlock and struck me under the chin. "You're doing splendidly," said Toplady, spitting willow-twigs.

I pulled strongly, really beginning to get the feel of the oars now. The evening was very warm. I noticed that the pillar of gnats had left Toplady's head. I glanced up above my own. As I had thought, they—

"On your right, old chap, a couple of good ones!" The first was a good one, but the second was nearly knocked out of my hand by a rubber raft containing a mariner of about eleven years. The willows got in our hair and scratched our necks. Toplady tugged at a succession of branches like a one-man bellringer. "*Now we're off,*" he said after some minutes.

"Where," I asked, confidence rekindled by quite ten successful strokes—"where are the steps I started from?"

"Left them behind."

"That's the stuff," I said. Then, presently—"I don't see them, though."

"You're doing splendidly. Keep going as you are and you'll soon get back to 'em."

I wavered in my stroke.

"Do you mean to say I'm not even—?"

It was true. I could see that Richmond Bridge, away from which I was pulling so strongly, was getting nearer every minute. It was humiliating. I set my teeth and plunged the oars deeper. Triumphantly, inch by painful, gnat-bitten inch, I overhauled the seat full of middle-aged ladies. I pulled strongly. I overhauled the end lady. I pulled like mad. Presently I could see the second lady's left foot out of the corner of my eye. Six good ones brought me abreast of her. Six more would overtake the magenta jumper next door.

"Excellent!" lauded Toplady, his eye too on the human markers—"Now you've got the knack of it!"

The lady in magenta, now in full view, smiled at me, laughed even. Then she waved, and I saw that she was the lady who comes and sits with the baby on Tuesdays.

"On your right," said Toplady. But I could never resist waving to a lady, even a middle-aged one, and it was with my right that I was waving. With a pneumatic impact we struck the rubber raft heavily amidships.

Everyone suddenly burst out swimming.

"Gar!" cried the eleven-year-old, striking out in a quick, newt-like breast-stroke—"want all the flaming river, do you?"



"Well, Miss Jones, have you thought of a good ending to my autobiography yet?"

He was lucky to be dressed for the occasion. We, of course, were not. However, groping under the willows Toplady assured me that we should be quite dry after we had run along the bank and arranged for Mrs. Wraithby to have her dinghy arrested before it became a danger to navigation.

It seemed to me that he spat out the last three words—but it may just have been willow-twigs. J. B. B.

The Felon

IN this hut there lives a felon
Fled from justice to the wild,
And he lives on water-melon
Brought him by a negro child.

On a home-made viol de gamba
Sad and solemn songs he plays

Nightly to the listening mamba,
Tunes of far and distant days.

Burning sorrows at his singing
For a moment take to flight;
Memories of home come winging
To him through the tropic night.

Thoughts of wife and home in Hitchin,
Thoughts of many a crib to crack;
Slippers warming in the kitchen
Till the dawn when he came back.

Now in exile in the jungle,
Carpet slippers warmed no more;
Only once he made a bungle;
One loud step upon the floor . . .

Now he sits, a hoary sinner,
Exile nominally free,
Water-melon for his dinner,
Water-melon for his tea.

THE Mercury's new season of plays by poets gets a flying start with *Happy As Larry*, an Irish satiric melodrama by Mr. DONAGH MACDONAGH which investigates woman's constancy with wit and considerable verbal skill. It is a mad little play arriving unfalteringly by its own roundabout means at the extreme sanity, detached and frighteningly realistic, which lies at the root of most Irish philosophy. This latter point is one which will never be properly understood by the English, who, far the more sentimental of the two, continue to flatter themselves that it is they who think clearly while the Irish live topsy-turvy in a misty word-embroidered dream.

Mr. MACDONAGH's method is to lead us gently up the path of poesy, lulling us with beauty and melancholy and fine cosmic utterance, and then to kick us face downwards into a thornbush. The effect is grand and stimulating and makes us feel modestly confident that we have got somewhere. Many poets when they write plays are content to let their characters behave like sheep inquiring the way to the nearest slaughter-house, but not so this one, who has too much humour and too full-blooded an approach to drama to allow theatrical anæmia to develop. The play begins with four tailors stitching before the curtain, and their talk turning, as I have often noticed it quickly does with tailors, to woman, one of them cites the curious case of his grandfather. The curtain then rises fifty years back on this grandfather, arrested in a graveyard by the spectacle of a young widow waving a fan over her husband's new-filled grave. He is moved by this touching exercise—she has promised never to marry again until the grave is dry—to take the widow home with him, where he is immediately poisoned by his doctor, who looks like an Edwardian Foreign Secretary with the amorous dash of Groucho Marx. Before the wake has even started the doctor leads *Larry's* widow astray. At this the four tailors, deeply shocked, decide to take a Dunne-return into the

At the Play

Happy As Larry (MERCURY)—One, Two, Three! (DUKE OF YORK'S)

past and give the doctor a taste of his own medicine. Their impingement on the wake is memorable, and their dance round the dying doctor makes one wonder why *Macbeth's* witches have never been played in bowler hats. A wicked chemist now advises *Larry's* widow that a quart of his fast-congealing blood might yet save her lover, so she goes into the bedroom armed with a small cutlass and a map of the circulatory system; but this is the end

winter. *A Pound On Demand*, an early curtain-raiser by Mr. SEAN O'CASEY, at the same theatre, is about two drunks in a post-office and is nowhere above the level of a family charade.

It is hard to believe the HALES have never before appeared on the stage together, but there they are at last in *One, Two, Three!* at the Duke of York's, and their belated combination is too dazzling to be missed. Combination is the word, for their joint team-work is surpassing good. All things considered, their best turn is a visible version of their radio *tour de force*, "All Hale," in which they take off William and Dick Barton and such-like disturbers of the peace, playing all the parts themselves with amazing quick-fire mimicry. But one which gave me peculiar pleasure (as life-president of the Crooners Malevolent Society) is that where BINNIE, singing straight a conventional posy of love-lies-bleeding, is informed with brotherly candour that she is out-of-date, and comes on again as an American hell-binder to drool and gargle the same song into a mike. The return of the girl with the unwanted che-ild to three different kinds of papa is also highly acceptable, the Tchekov rendering being, I think, the funniest; and they wind up satisfactorily by plucking afresh the musical plums of their separate pasts, such as "Who Stole My Heart Away?" and "Dance, Dance, Dance, Little Lady."

As a whole the revue is uneven, though Mr. CHARLES HESLOP and Miss GAIL KENDAL prop it up here and there. It opens with a clever rag by Mr. ALAN MELVILLE on our American musicals and goes on to a nice song, also by him, about spivs, but this early promise is not maintained, and low for the evening is recorded during a song about feeling blue, pronounced blee-oo, which is not intended to burlesque. About the charm and brilliance of the HALES, however, there is no shadow of doubt.

ERIC.



THE DOCTOR FACES THE BOWLERS.

Doctor Mr. FRED JOHNSON

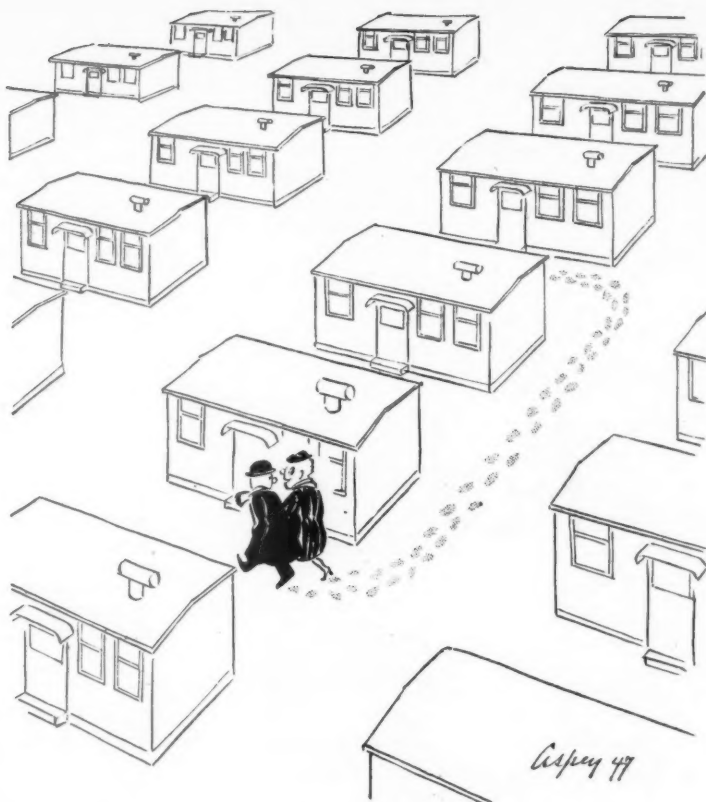
of her, for she has the grace to die of fright when *Larry* awakes and returns to us with a tremendous hangover to begin a new and exciting life with the forthcoming lady from the cemetery. Round these breathless corners of time and mood the author leads us persuasively, and his blending of high spirits and hard hitting at humanity is a bracing tonic. Most of the play is in couplets, which he knows well how to load with bathos. Mr. DENIS CAREY's production could scarcely be bettered, and the acting of the entire cast is so uncommonly expressive that I am sorry only to be able to mention Mr. LIAM REDMOND, Miss SHEILA

At the Opera

Don Giovanni (VIENNA STATE OPERA, COVENT GARDEN)—*Tosca* (SADLER'S WELLS)

THE Vienna State Opera opened their season at Covent Garden with that beautiful, inconsistent, puzzling and endlessly fascinating opera, MOZART'S *Don Giovanni*. There will be arguments about it until the end of time: how it is possible, for instance (particularly in so leisurely a country as Spain), not only to kill and bury the *Commendatore*, but to commission, execute and erect a statue to his memory, all in twenty-four hours; whether the priggish *Donna Anna* ever intended to marry *Don Ottavio* or whether (as E. T. A. Hoffmann held) she was consumed with a secret passion for *Don Giovanni*; and whether in fact there is any reason at all (other than the necessity for a tenor) for *Don Ottavio's* existence. All he does in the opera is to sing two arias and send for the police to arrest *Don Giovanni* on the flimsiest of circumstantial evidence. To these vexed questions must now be added the sad case of *Donna Elvira*, in which the Covent Garden programme has taken a hand. This lady was, unfortunately but unquestionably, seduced by *Don Giovanni* at Burgos, so in a desperate attempt to save her reputation the programme married her to him. *Honi soit*... It also gave her *Zerlina* for a maid, and if we are to infer that *Zerlina* was with her at Burgos the possibilities opened up are endless and too delicate to pursue here.

From the producer's point of view *Don Giovanni* is both a delight and a nightmare. It lends itself to the most romantic production, but it is so fragmentary that it needs some very strong cement to hold it together. In the Vienna production this was provided by a handsome fixed architectural setting behind which various drop-scenes were displayed representing streets, ballrooms and so on, and it fulfilled its function even if the general effect was rather like Wellington Barracks. The production was greatly superior to that of *Fidelio*—which was dull in the extreme—but we have one great reproach to level at the producer for the manner of entry of the statue of the *Commendatore* when it comes to sup with *Don Giovanni*. The tramp of marble feet is heard in the orchestra long before the statue appears. *Leporello* goes to see what is the horror that has made *Donna Elvira* scream, and he comes back



"And what do you think of the Browns' place?"

shaking with terror and describes its unearthly appearance and thunderous approach. It arrives at the door and knocks. The audience is in breathless suspense. *Don Giovanni*, who may be a libertine and a blasphemer but lacks nothing in courage, flings wide the door—and the statue is trundled in on wheels! The effect of the whole of the last act is spoiled by this horrible anti-climax.

All these are impressions "recollected in tranquillity," because at the performance I was lost in enjoyment of the playing of the orchestra almost to the exclusion of all else. Such transparent string tone, such precision on the part of the wind, such balance, such butterfly-wing delicacy and such exquisite accompaniment of the recitatives by JOSEF KRIPS the conductor were a joy to hear. It was a pity that the recitatives must be accompanied on a grand piano instead of a harpsichord, and that the Serenade was sung to the sound of a harp instead of a mandoline. Of the singers, HILDE GÜDEN as *Zerlina* gave the greatest pleasure. She was truly seductive both to hear and to see, and she sang

with the sweetness and ease of a bird. The *Donna Elvira* of ELISABETH SCHWARZKOPF was excellent, MARIA CEBOTARI'S *Donna Anna* less good. ANTON DERMOTA sang with style and feeling as *Don Ottavio*, though his intonation was not above reproach. The *Leporello* of ERICH KUNZ was the comic servant of the Harlequin type. PAUL SCHOEFFLER was not at his best as *Don Giovanni*, as was proved by his subsequent performance in *Così fan Tutte*.

Amid the well-deserved acclamations earned by the Vienna Opera, native products are apt to be forgotten. Sadler's Wells began their season with a really excellent performance of *Tosca*, with VICTORIA SLADEN in the title rôle. RODERICK JONES'S *Scarpia* was a study in tight-lipped cruelty sung with a restraint that made it quite horrible. This was an interesting contrast to the drooling bestiality and sulphurous violence with which STABILE invests the rôle. The *Cavaradossi* of JAMES JOHNSTON was vocally excellent, and he made the most of the famous aria in the last act. MICHAEL MUDIE conducted.

D. C. B.



"No, the idea is to start with temporary houses and then gradually to make them permanent."

Our Booking Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

Lloyd George

MR. A. J. SYLVESTER, who was private secretary to Lloyd George for nearly thirty years, has given a very lifelike and detailed picture of him in *The Real Lloyd George* (CASSELL, 18/-). It is a straightforward record, nothing is overdramatized, and, exasperating though Lloyd George often was, there is no resentment in Mr. SYLVESTER's portrait. Lloyd George was, he says, the most remarkable man he has ever known, and his aim has been to present him in all his aspects. His first close view of Lloyd George was at a Cabinet meeting, which he attended as a shorthand-writer. Lloyd George and Asquith were discussing the shell shortage, and Mr. SYLVESTER was deeply impressed by Lloyd George's overpowering vehemence. A year later Lloyd George was Premier, and Mr. SYLVESTER gives many impressions of him at the height of his power, in his relations with Clemenceau, Briand, Barthou, and, most vivid of all, on the evening when the Irish Peace Treaty was signed. After his fall from power he went on a triumphal tour through the States and Canada, a very exhausting experience for Mr. SYLVESTER, who, however, continued to be devoted to his chief, in spite of his capriciousness and lack of consideration. The last third of the book is the most absorbing and the most revelatory. It deals with the meeting between Lloyd George and Hitler, the outbreak of the war, Mr. Churchill's fruitless attempts to secure Lloyd George's co-operation, Dame Margaret's death, Lloyd George's second marriage, and his return to Wales to die.

H. K.

Elegy for Sixteen Craftsmen

Noted hitherto for one aspect of its richly-integrated resourcefulness, the life of Thomas Hennell is now told by Mr. H. J. MASSINGHAM in a memoir affixed to *The Countryman at Work* (ARCHITECTURAL PRESS, 12/6). Hennell made name and fame out of war commissions in Iceland; but his genius was almost unique in the deliberate homeliness of its dedication. These particular articles and pictures came out in *The Architectural Review* between 1941 and 1943. Their author was killed by Javanese terrorists in 1945. Fifteen English crafts, from the potter's to the cider-maker's, are recorded with warm-hearted intimacy in sturdy, unaffected prose; and illustrated—perfectly in so far as the pictures are blue-prints of workshops and tools—in the rather scrawny line, drawn with diluted marking-ink, which was more admired by the critics than by the artist. He himself regretted that he could not cut his own blocks; and a more exacting technique might possibly have shown up his rather invertebrate anatomy and perhaps have rendered his "calligraphic" draughtsmanship as decorative as his writing. The writing, by the way, records two quatrains of a poem. One would have given much for more of Hennell's verse, especially the unprinted panegyric which—crowned by the sexton's "Never mind, Master Tom, you done your best"—he read over a shepherd friend's grave.

H. P. E.

Shelley in Italy

In *Shelley in Italy* (JOHN LEHMANN, 8/6) Mr. JOHN LEHMANN has made an excellent selection from the poetry Shelley wrote after leaving for Italy in 1818, and has prefaced this selection with a long and interesting introduction. Nearly all Shelley's finest work belongs to this period, which includes "Adonais," "Prometheus Unbound," the "Ode to the West Wind," the last chorus from "Hellas," and the poems to Jane Williams. This "tremendous awakening," as Mr. LEHMANN calls it, was, he thinks, due to the effect on Shelley of reaching the shores of the Mediterranean, breathing for the first time the air of Italy and seeing the remains of classical civilization in their exuberant natural setting under the southern sun. "One can only," Mr. LEHMANN adds, "dimly conjecture what the result might have been if to the experience of Rome and Italy had been added that of Athens and Greece." From Shelley's notebooks and letters Mr. LEHMANN gives instances of his enthusiasm for the Italian painters and, more particularly, for classical sculpture. There can indeed be no question, for anyone who reads his lyrical praise of the group of Bacchus and Ampelus in Florence, that Shelley was very deeply moved by the beauty of those youthful divinities. Yet, after all, neither classical sculpture nor the Mediterranean landscape is the chief inspiration of his later poetry, but either, as in the poems to Jane, a renewal of hope stirred by a renewal of love, or, as in "Adonais," a longing for the liberation which death might bring.

H. K.

Speaking for Ourselves

Every man ought to be a judge of pictures who has not been "connoisseured out of his senses," said Blake. As most of us have undergone the third-degree ordeal in question we should be grateful to Messrs. ROBERT GOLDWATER and MARCO TREVES for trying to liberate our powers of appreciation and criticism. This they do in *Artists on Art* (KEGAN PAUL, 21/-), a massive, well-chosen anthology of the personal pronouncements of painters and sculptors. It starts with Cennino Cennini's

fourteenth-century primer and ends up with Orozco suggesting "murals" to suit the skyscrapers of Manhattan. Within these limits, the artist's own philosophy, his notion of technique, his views on schools, patrons, critics, and so forth, find untrammelled expression. An excellent system of cross-references shows the recurrent rise and wane of views fondly thought to be progressive by those who do not hold with Whistler that "art is limited to the infinite, and beginning there cannot progress." The unprecedented chaos of the last pages is possibly due to the fact that the painting or sculpture which should be itself a direct communication has to be glossed like an ancient manuscript before the average man can understand it. This, the fault of both sides, was bewailed, in 1912 or so, by Franz Marc. There are a few odd inclusions and omissions—less stimulating Americans, for instance, take the place of Sargent. But half the texts have never been translated before, and the illustrations—largely self-portraits—are delightful.

H. P. E.

Miscellany

Miscellaneous writings, some hitherto unpublished, of the American novelist F. SCOTT FITZGERALD, whose work was never much known in this country (he is completely unrepresented, for instance, in the London Library), have been collected by Mr. Edmund Wilson in a volume called *The Crack-Up* (FALCON PRESS, 17/6), which is the title of one of the longer pieces it contains—the account, written in 1936, of FITZGERALD's nervous breakdown. This has its place in the early part of the book in a sequence of articles, written between 1931 and 1937, which form a sketchy autobiography (he died in 1941 at forty-four); but probably for most readers, certainly for all interested in writing, the most fascinating pages will be the one hundred and fifty or so devoted to "The Note-Books," which (the editor says) "belonged to a plane of the activity of his mind and his craft so much higher than that represented by this rather inferior magazine fiction" (his later short stories) "that it was difficult for him to incorporate them in it." They range from the strayest of stray phrases to the most careful paragraphs of description or reflection and are exhaustively classified under twenty-one headings; and they are the best part of a big, interesting book, which also contains a section of FITZGERALD's letters as well as critical contributions or letters from eminent literary people including Edith Wharton, T. S. Eliot and John Dos Passos.

R. M.

It Doesn't Happen Here.

Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House (MICHAEL JOSEPH, 10/6) rings so nostalgically in a country where a hen-coop cannot be erected without Cabinet sanction that it is easy to guess about which side of the Atlantic Mr. ERIC HODGINS is writing. He is an effective humorist with a kindly understanding of the agonies of the simpleton up against the world. Mr. and Mrs. Blandings are innocents easily talked into buying a tumble-down antique on top of a deserted hill. By the time it becomes obvious that it will be cheaper to build a new house than to attempt to inject life into the old one they are already in a ruinous financial muddle; and when at last their modest ambitions take extensive shape on the drawing-board their troubles have only just begun. For one thing, they by no means see eye to eye, their divisions being exultingly exploited by the human vultures who flock greedily to the kill. For another, nature proves as unremittently hostile as only nature can. In the end a vast mansion

and a vast overdraft black out the future of poor disillusioned Mr. Blandings, and the only dream remaining to him is of a vast holocaust, comprehensively insured. The crushing chain of misadventures, most convincingly developed, which crowd upon this honest man are devised with unflagging ingenuity and it would seem with much expert knowledge of torts and taps, while the writing is genuinely funny without being forced. Crazy illustrations by Mr. WILLIAM STEIG add to the laughter. E. O. D. K.

A Great Raid

"What wonders bluff and impudence will get away with!" That is the comment made by one of the members of a small party ("a mixed bag, gathered from every walk of life, with only one regular soldier and one regular sailor") who left Australia on September 1st, 1943, and sailed nearly three thousand miles to attack enemy shipping in the harbour of Singapore—"the vital centre of Japan's Co-Prosperity Sphere." The story of their hard physical training, of all the care, determination, courage and humour, of the voyage and the successful operation are told by NOEL WYNYARD (wife of the late Lieut.-Cmdr. D. M. N. Davidson, D.S.O., R.N.V.R., one of the participants) in *Winning Hazard* (SAMPSON LOW, 10/6). In a foreword Major-General Sir Colin Gubbins, K.C.M.G., D.S.O., referring to a second operation the following year when the same party "all fell in battle or by execution," quotes a tribute from the enemy—"We do not hesitate to call them real heroes of a forlorn hope . . . we cannot but spare a tear for them." There is no space here to go into details of how "limpets" were carried in collapsible canoes and fastened by divers to the vulnerable parts of ships and how the other sides of these ships had to be reached before the two-minute time-fuse burned through. It is odd that the crew should have considered that the deliberate blackening of their own bodies with evil-smelling colouring and stinging spirit was "the hardest task of the whole cruise." The tale of their endeavour and success makes a magnificent book. The story of the second attempt is given in a log which ends abruptly.

B. E. B.



"We haven't come across quite so many Ministry officials this year."



"Well, I won't be coming to-morrow, mum, as me and my cake queue is going on an outing."

Luff Interest

II

THE second time we took sail in the dinghy *Sara Ann* we were careful to wait for a day when our fellow-mariners had swept away in their shallops to pit their skill with cleat and clew against that of the giants of a neighbouring staithe. The estuary was therefore free from obstacles, if you excepted the potato-barge sunk by Old Bob's grandfather while in liquor and too little water, and the flashy cabin cruiser in which it was improbably believed that princelings of the hardware industry passed out-of-date week-ends siphoning champagne out of satin slippers.

"As if you could get satin slippers!" muttered my first officer, who had by now dug most of the mud of our first voyage out of her hair. This time I not only remembered the tiller, but everything else, for I had been glued for two days to my little book. As for the morning, it was as full of

promise as my heart of modest hope. The tide was moving smartly uphill (a gentle breeze concurring) at about, or so I judged, three clove-hitches to the hour towards the great uncharted marshes, hide-out of strange fowl and of the stranger men who harried them with telescopes. Into these samphired wastes the estuary disappeared like a serpent. My intention was to follow it, tacking back later on the ebb, and I make bold to think that any seafaring men who are still among my readers would find it hard to devise a more sailor-like plan.

"It should be a piece of ship's biscuit," I cried, pushing off and leaping lightly to the controls. As we began to move rapidly upstream an extraordinary sensation swept over me of being master of the elements. I imagine the moon must often feel rather similarly, but in man such an emotion is seldom of lasting quality.

"You're missing the memorial to Bob's grandfather," shouted the first officer, "but not so the Palace of Industry." And she pointed to the cabin cruiser.

"A routine matter," I replied, and leaned more heavily on the tiller. I think most of you would have done the same, but the dividend was surprising. The sail, which had been straining happily far out to the left, swung back violently to centre and then, taking the first officer's sun spectacles as it went, climbed the mast in a tumbled parcel of idiot canvas. For a moment *Sara Ann* toyed with a fancy to capsize, but, thinking better of it, put her nose straight at the target and charged. She had lost all interest in the tiller.

"I recall an admirable illustration of this predicament on page 11," I said.

"Would you like me to radio the underwriters?"

"Stand by to fend off!" I commanded, for the gap was closing quickly. Long incarceration in the Girl Guides, and also, no doubt, formative years passed in the shadow of the Women's Institute, shaped the next few seconds. The first officer lunged shrewdly with a scull. It scraped along the gleaming paint until, finding a purchase against a porthole, it held us off. After that it went through the glass with a merry tinkling, which was repeated more loudly from within as it broke up what must have been an important gathering of crockery.

"Well done!" I said, as we swept on and the sail returned to a more workmanlike position. "That should give them something to talk about besides hardware."

"We must remember the scull on the way back."

Now all was plain sailing. Having had her frolic *Sara Ann* became as docile as a cab-horse. The hub and bub of the village lay already far behind and the banks of the estuary slipped past smoothly, while from the flats ahead large waterproofed birds took off to comment on us unfavourably to their young. Wherever the eye swivelled were wide tracts of salt herbage unsullied by human heel. It was a golden moment. Even the first officer appeared content.

"Say the word when you would like to turn back," I cried, diagram 5 on page 33 vivid in my memory, when we had sailed some way.

"Shall we go a bit farther? We might see a guillemot."

"By all means."

Sara Ann surged on, obeying my slightest whim. It was what I had imagined sailing to be like. I lit my pipe. The wind whistled pleasingly in the treble strings at the thin end of the mast.

"Aren't the banks closing in rather?"

"Perhaps they are," I admitted. "We are probably ripe for diagram 5."

I pushed the tiller, but before we were halfway round we were almost into the bank, and I had to come back again. The trouble with sailing boats is they have no brakes. Nor have horses, you may reply, but myself I never take the saddle without a pad well soaked with chloroform in my pocket.

"Never mind," I murmured, "this very likely leads back into the main stream."

As I said it a very large scrubbing-brush seemed to be applied by unseen forces to *Sara Ann's* underside.

"Mud to the right!"

I swung to the left. We freed, then

another scrubbing-brush came into action. I tried a middle path, and a final and tremendous brush did its work. We were firmly wedged in a great bank of mud which grew larger as we watched. Irretrievably wedged.

"I take it the tide has turned," said the first officer coldly. "Have you the table on you?"

Tide-tables are brutal realists.

"It says we shall be floated off about nine o'clock to-night," I reported. "Until then I feel convinced we can commune profitably with Nature at her wildest and most sublime."

"Or we can walk home to lunch across the marshes," she snapped. She started immediately to do so, and

sank up to her thighs in a mixture of black mud, treacle and cement.

"Trust Nature to win," I said.

ERIC.

"Bees, reducing stock, three for sale."

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S1665

"He said he'd be back to give the dog a run. That was exactly seven years ago to-day."

No, I Am Not One.

AM I a good sport? I sincerely hope not. Being a good sport means that you toss for something, and win, and then let the other person choose, because he looks so fed up.

Toss for it, they say! Not me. If you so badly want to have first go, you have it. I'd just as soon not win, in any case. In fact I would rather not take part. I'd rather look on while you two play; then no one will ask me to let them have another go, because that one was a pure accident. He moved too soon, and touched the ball without meaning to. Why, it only just went that far. Yes, he realizes it ought to count if you are playing strict rules, but then this is not a serious match. I don't mind, do I? But I'm afraid I do, that's just the trouble. Don't ask me to be a sport.

I don't know who I get it from; not from my sister Jessie. She is a real sport. When she revokes at bridge she thinks it so absurd of her not to have realized what she was doing, but she must have been thinking of something else; fortunately she's sport enough to admit it; that is if we are really quite sure she *didn't* follow. Yes, she knows we have turned back the trick and shown her; at any rate we turned back a trick with three hearts and one diamond in it, but's it too long ago to remember whether that is the same trick. In any case it makes no difference. It was just a mistake. She's not embarrassed, she's too much

of a sport for that. How do I mean . . . a penalty? We are not professionals. We are not playing at the Portland Club. We are just playing for the sport of the thing. It's only a game. Of course if it is just a question of the threepence, I can have it with pleasure. Well, then, how many points do we take? It seems to her the rule changes every time, according to who is to gain. She doesn't know why it should always be me who settles what the rule is.

Oh, there is no need to get the book . . . if people want to insist on the strict letter of the law in family bridge they must do so. It is not her idea of things.

The holidays come round and I am allotted the one I wanted. So did Hubbard want it. Extraordinary thing, he wanted the very same one, and they have given it to me. He doesn't suppose I really care which one I have. Will I be a sport? No, I'm afraid I won't. Perhaps he will be a sport instead.

Strange chap, they say of me. I go into a pub with one friend to have two beers, and there are seven other people there who are in good form, and press us to join them: If we do, we must stand our round. To make this worth doing we must have seven beers, or else pay for seven and have two, which was not the idea when we came in. So we do not join the party this time. And we are not good sports.

I was not a good sport this summer

when I caught some girl's boy-friend at square leg when he was ninety-eight, although we had been trying to get him out for two hours. The girl said so. I wonder why *he* was not a good sport and why he did not give me a catch earlier.

Neither was I a good sport when I refused to play golf for ten bob with a man I knew would beat me, as he also knew very well, or he would not have suggested the game.

I am only a good sport, I believe, if I lend £2 to a fellow who to my certain knowledge will never pay it back; and I shall certainly not be a good sport if I ever mention the fact to him in future. I am a good sport if I do the washing up, but not if I resent being helped out in my cross-word puzzle by people who finish it while my back is turned.

Still I am sport enough to settle this argument that is going on about whether we ought to hold the Olympic Games here now or not.

I say we should hold them here, if only to prevent America holding them, but that every team should bring its own food and that we, as good hosts, should not compete ourselves. H. C.

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Morning



Noon



Night

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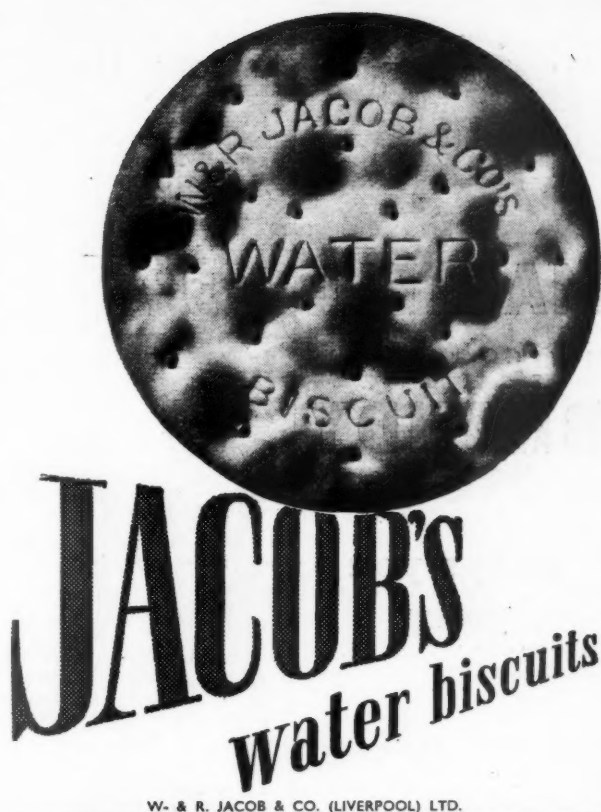


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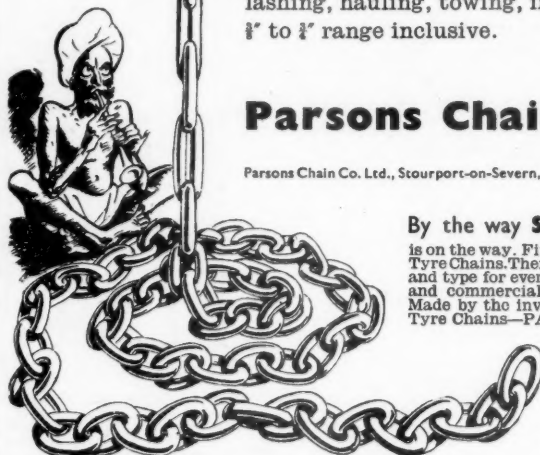
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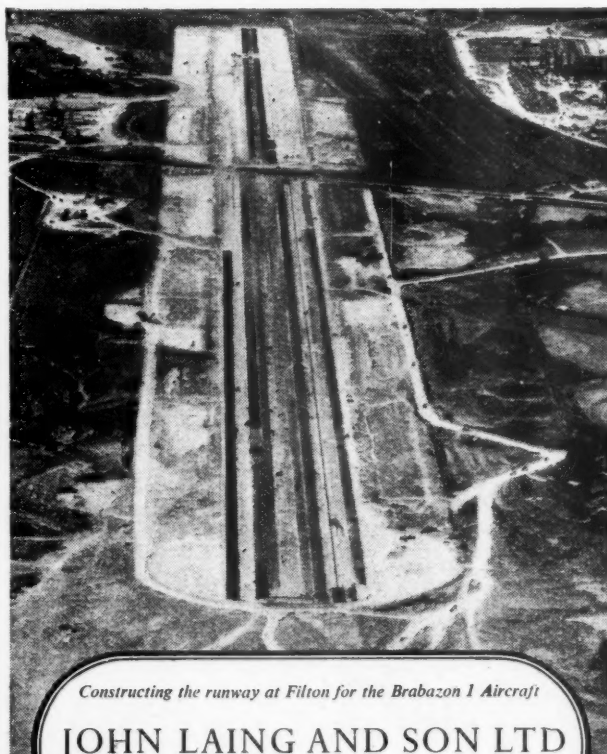
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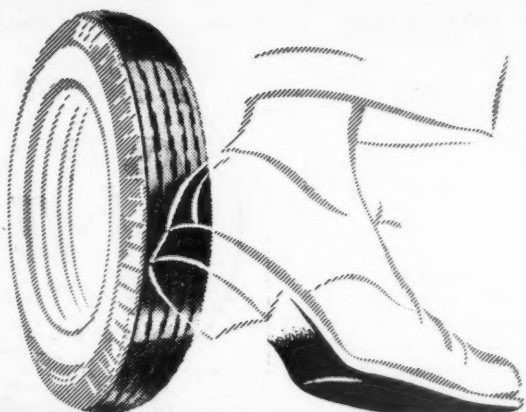
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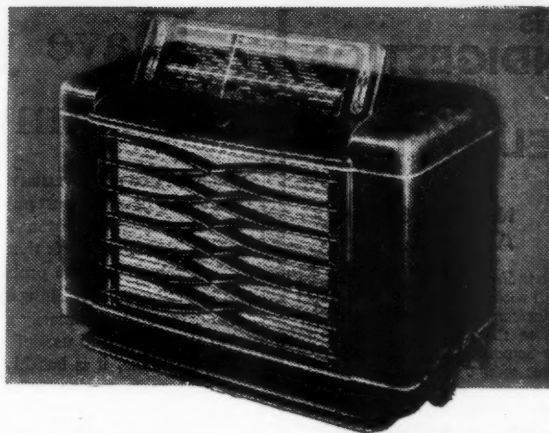
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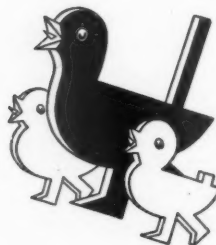
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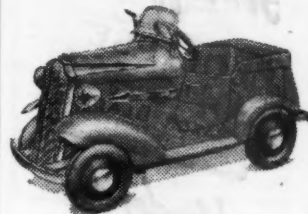
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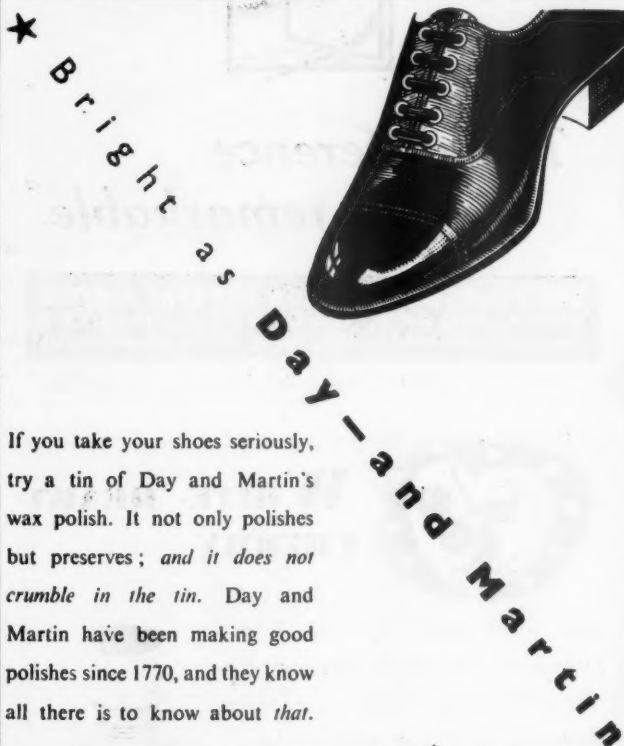
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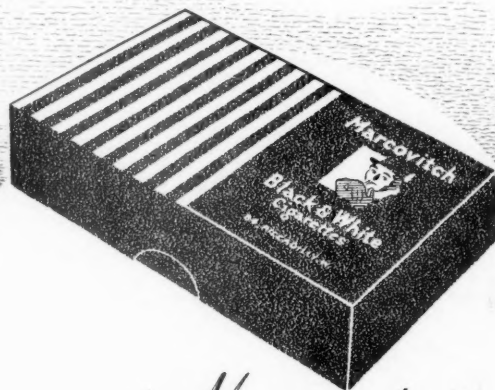
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